

Madison County Farmer Installs over 90 Acres of Filter Strips

Franklin and Dot James live on a 1,000 acre family farm in north Madison County. Franklin James has been involved with agriculture all of his life and has been a leader in soil and water conservation for many years.

He was a Soil Conservation District supervisor for 31 years from 1972 until 2003. He served as District Chairman for 27 years from 1975 until 2003, as Vice-Chairman of the West Tennessee Region of the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts (TACD) from 1980 to 1985 and as TACD Area 8 Director from 1985 to 1994. He also served on the board of the Obion-Forked Deer River Basin Authority for 30 years from 1973 until 2003.



Franklin and Dot James on their family farm.

Most of his farm has been no-tilled for several years and conservation practices have been installed where needed. Last year he worked closely with the District to install over 90 acres of filter strips along the stream banks of his farm.



Filter strips are an important conservation practice as they intercept potential stream contaminants from storm runoff. Filter strips are 20 to 100 foot wide strips of grass located along the lower part of crop fields and adjacent to streams. By slowing storm runoff from crop fields, filter strips allow suspended soil particles, organics, nutrients, pesticides, and other materials to settle out into the grass strip. These potential contaminants are then filtered by the soil or are taken up by the grass.

With filter strips many materials are intercepted and are prevented from entering the nation's waterways as

contaminants. Contaminants are a problem throughout our waters. This is especially true along the coast in the Gulf of Mexico where the Mississippi empties its nutrient rich waters. There, a 7,000 square mile dead zone exists where the waters are depleted of oxygen and aren't able to support most marine life.

It is commonly thought that if significant acres of filter strips were installed on agricultural lands the nutrient load of the Mississippi would be reduced and this would revitalize the dead zone in the Gulf. Franklin James installed over 90 acres of filter streams on his farm because he believes that everyone can make a difference.

